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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER ASEC I2

SUBJECT: COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES BOMBING -- INFORMATION
FROM POLITICAL CONTACTS

Classified By: Classified By: Acting DCM Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Post has reached out to political party leaders and other political contacts in the aftermath of the April 12 bombing in the Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR). The CoR is located in the Baghdad Convention Center in the International Zone and takes up virtually the entire building. The bomb exploded at approximately 1430 in the CoR cafeteria after the CoR had concluded its session for the day, with many members adjourning to the cafeteria for lunch.

Those in or near the cafeteria at the time of the bombing described a loud blast, with smoke and dust that obscured any view of the blast site. Only the sounds of the injured were obvious.

¶2. (SBU) The number of casualties remains unclear. PolOffs have verified the death so far of one CoR member, Mohammed Awad from Salih al-Mutlaq's Hewar party. Two others that we know of remain in very poor condition. These include Hewar CoR member Taha Al-Luhaiuby; and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan member Assi Hussein Mohammed. We have heard reports of possibly seven additional deaths, possibly of individuals who were taken to hospitals outside of the IZ.

¶3. (SBU) Sadrist members, including Falah Shenshel, were injured although the severity is not yet known. SCIRI CoR member Ridha Jawad Takki told poloff that SCIRI had no injuries, and one Badr parliamentarian was slightly injured. While the block leaders of Dawa Tanzim (Abdulkarim al-Anzy), Fadhila (Hassan al-Shammari), and the Shi'a Independents (Khalid al-Atiya) are apparently unharmed, our contacts had not accounted for all members in those groups. Ayad Allawi's Iraqiyya party reports one member, former Minister of Minerals and Industry Osama al-Najafi, was lightly injured.

¶4. (SBU) GOI officials including National Security Advisor Muwafiq Rubai, Minister of Defense Abdulqader al-Ubaydi, and Acting Prime Minister Barham Salih visited the MNF-I Combat Support Hospital (CSH) to meet with the wounded there. Embassy political contacts described damage to the CoR building as mostly superficial although the cafeteria requires significant repairs.

¶5. (C) Following the attack, Acting Prime Minister Barham Salih convened senior Iraqi security officials as well as CG and Acting DCM. Salih said PM Maliki had been consulted and instructed Salih to take whatever security measures were necessary. Salih expressed appreciation for USG assistance in the attack's investigation and stated that while they have some individuals they wish to speak with, there are no clear suspects. At the meeting it was decided that the Ministry of

Interior will assume responsibility) at least in the short term) for CoR security.

¶6. (C) CoR Speaker Mahmud Mashadani of the Sunni Tuwafiq bloc has announced that the CoR will hold a special session on Friday, April 13, to demonstrate that the terrorists were not able to deter the CoR. This will be the first time the CoR has held a session on a Friday. There is a weekly vehicle ban in Baghdad on Friday mornings, so the number of participants may be relatively low. Mashadani's Chief of Staff told poloff that would not matter, as even a small turnout would send a strong message of defiance.

¶7. (SBU) Also on March 12, terrorists struck at vital city infrastructure, destroying Sarafia Bridge across the Tigris.

¶8. (C) Comment. The full impact of CoR attack will not be known for some time. The special CoR session sends an important signal of national unity. However, finger-pointing has already begun in the media and among some of our CoR contacts. One Shia media outlet asserted that the attack was an inside job likely carried out by a Sunni MP. Mashadani's Sunni Chief of Staff blamed Shia Deputy Speaker Khalid Attiya, who oversees security for the building. One immediate impact could be lessened participation, if only from those who have been temporarily incapacitated. This could make it difficult to obtain a quorum necessary for passing legislation. It will take strong leadership from the CoR's top members to encourage attendance and use the attack as an opportunity to forge greater solidarity rather than reinforce sectarian suspicions and divisiveness.

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